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Ph: (512) 479-0388
www.EnvironmentTexas.org

October 24, 2023

The Honorable Leslie Pool
Austin City Council
301 W 2nd St.
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Council Member Pool,

I write in enthusiastic support for your HOME Initiative.

Austin is one of America's fastest-growing cities. This growth has brought dynamism to the city, but has also created environmental problems. Because much of Austin's growth has taken place at the urban fringe, the addition of new residents and businesses has caused persistent and worsening problems with traffic congestion, air pollution and water quality, as more undeveloped land is converted into new housing development.

Looking to the future, Austin has a choice. We can continue to sprawl farther and farther outward or we can find ways to accommodate people and businesses within the city's existing neighborhoods.

Focusing new growth in compact, walkable neighborhoods can address many of Austin's growing pains. Done right, compact development can benefit the environment and provide access to types of housing - such as housing in the "missing middle" between high-rises and single-family homes - that can meet Austin's dire housing needs. In fact, this exact approach was recommended in the 2012 Imagine Austin Comprehensive plan and has been consistently reaffirmed by City Council since.

Furthermore, as documented by our 2017 report "Growing Greener,"¹ which reviewed the existing literature produced by academic and government researchers on the environmental effects of different urban densities - compact

¹ "Growing Greener: The Environmental Benefits of a Compact and Connected Austin"
Environment Texas Research and Policy Center, October 2017
<https://environmentamerica.org/texas/center/resources/growing-greener-2/>



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development can deliver tangible benefits for the environment – reducing energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, curbing the flow of polluted runoff into streams and lakes, and protecting natural areas and agricultural lands.

With strong policies to mitigate the local impacts of greater density, such as the city's new green infrastructure requirements and the proposed "Functional Green" program, Austin can develop in a way that will bring lasting environmental benefits. Thank you again for your work on this initiative and your ongoing leadership tackling Austin's environmental needs.

Sincerely,

Luke Metzger
Executive Director, Environment Texas